



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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The Whole World Wants a Good Job

By State Rep. Don Vruwink

The Gallup company has done public opinion polling for more than 80 years. Company chairman Jim Giffon famously said, "What the whole world wants is a good job."

Not just any job. Stable, regular, well-paid employment that provides affordable health insurance and financial security in retirement.

Job creation has been at the top of the Wisconsin Legislature's agenda for several years. There are mixed reviews about the progress the state has made. We have quite a ways to go to hit the 250,000 new jobs that Governor Walker pledged.

Job creation is at the top of my agenda as well. I want to find ways to help smaller and newer businesses survive, thrive, and add jobs.

I want to focus on small and medium-sized businesses. In Wisconsin, firms with less than 50 employees accounted for 64 percent of new job creation in 2012, the most recent year for which data is available. Businesses that were five years old or younger accounted for 46.5 percent of new jobs, according to the study done by the University of Wisconsin and UW-Extension.

The authors of the study suggested that state government direct more resources to start-ups and smaller businesses rather than recruiting larger, established corporations. Unfortunately, Wisconsin lags behind the nation in the percentage of jobs created by new businesses. We ranked 47th in new business start-ups in 2012.

I serve on the Assembly Rural Development Committee as well as a more informal rural task force. The task force heard from an economic development specialist said Wisconsin should focus on our existing, local strengths, not try to create another Silicon Valley.

If a budding entrepreneur starts a high-tech company with good jobs, I welcome him or her with open arms. But we shouldn't neglect our existing manufacturers and agri-businesses, big and small. We shouldn't neglect the mom-and-pop operations that contribute so much to the local economy and the quality of life in a community.

Jim Clifton, chairman of the Gallup polling firm, noted that sustainable job creation “can’t be bought” with tax incentives and relaxed regulations. What we can do is make sure Wisconsin had a solid infrastructure that families and businesses can rely on.

That means good schools and technical colleges, good roads and public transit, and reliable high-speed Internet across the state. Those are investments that will return big dividends.

Rep. Don Vruwink represents the 43rd Assembly District, which includes parts of Rock, Walworth, Jefferson and Dane counties. He can be reached at Rep.Vruwink@legis.wi.gov and at 608-266-3790. The mailing address is P.O. Box 8953, Madison, WI 53708.

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